

Managing osteoarthritis pain

Take a closer look at alternative methods

BRISTOL, NH – (April 13, 2010) – Osteoarthritis (OA) affects nearly 27 million Americans, making it the most common type of arthritis. It is a major cause of work disability and reduced quality of life. However, managing osteoarthritis doesn't mean merely popping pills to numb the pain. There are many alternative methods to manage osteoarthritis pain; information Live Free Home Health Care believes can benefit many in our local community.

OA is a chronic condition characterized by the breakdown of the joint's cartilage, causing the bones to rub against each other, resulting in stiffness, pain and loss of movement in the joint. Though the cause of it is unknown, certain factors increase the risk, including heredity, obesity, joint injury, repeated overuse of certain joints, lack of physical activity, and nerve injury.

Symptoms can develop suddenly or slowly; however, only a doctor can make a proper diagnosis. "A proper diagnosis is important for proper treatment, as there are more than 100 types of arthritis, not to mention many other diseases and issues that could be causing the pain," said Jason Harvey, Co-Administrator of Live Free Home Health Care. "So many people remain undiagnosed because they feel joint pain is inevitable with old age, when in actuality their pain might signify osteoarthritis, which can be treated," Harvey continued. In fact, a nationwide survey published by Gaeta showed nearly one in five surveyed had chronic pain like that caused by arthritis, yet nearly half said they didn't know what caused their pain.

Once properly diagnosed, there are many ways to manage osteoarthritis pain. Some ways are more conventional than others, but since not everyone responds to various therapies in the same way, it is a good idea for an individual to try several techniques (under the supervision of a doctor) to find out what works best.

One of the most important ways to manage the pain of arthritis is weight control. For every one pound of weight lost, there is a four pound reduction in the load exerted on the knee for each step taken during daily activities; and losing as few as eleven pounds can cut the risk of developing knee osteoarthritis by 50 percent for some people.

Regular exercise helps keep joints moving, lessens pain and makes muscles around the joints stronger. Swimming is particularly suited for patients with osteoarthritis because the water's buoyancy allows for exercise with minimal impact stress to the joints while building strength and increasing range of motion. Tai chi, a slow, graceful Chinese martial art, as well as yoga are also very appropriate and beneficial exercises for those with osteoarthritis.

Warm and cold therapy can also be effective pain management techniques. Heat therapy, such as a warm shower, hot pack or heating pad can relax stiff and sore muscles. Cold therapy, such as cold compresses and frozen gel packs, works by numbing nerve endings in affected areas. Note that people who have Reynaud's phenomenon should not use cold therapies.

Massage therapy can also be considered. Massage brings warmth and relaxation to the painful areas. As muscle tension is relaxed and circulation is increased, pain is decreased.

While treating the body for osteoarthritis pain, don't neglect the power of one's mind. The mind plays an important role in how one feels pain and responds to illness. Managing stress through relaxation techniques can give a sense of control and wellbeing that makes it easier to manage pain and may also lesson anxiety, depression and sleeping problems.

A doctor may prescribe occupational therapy for someone with osteoarthritis. Occupational therapists can assist with body mechanics (learning to move the body in ways that do not increase pain), joint protection techniques and adapting daily activities to conserve energy.

There are a number of tools available to assist those suffering from OA with activities of daily living, including elevated toilet seats; scoop plates and bowls; grabbers/reachers (for long distance grasping); doorknobs; faucet controllers; and stainless steel bars with non-slip hand grips. Many other products are available through medical supply companies, including writing pens, key turners, button aids, zipper pulls and more.

When other treatment methods don't lessen the pain, or when moving and using one's joints becomes very difficult, surgery may be necessary. Joint replacement surgery has become more common over the years, and is regarded as a viable option when all else has failed.

An in-home care provider, such as Live Free Home Health Care, can help someone with arthritis to be as independent and in control of his or her own life as possible. An excellent in-home care provider understands the needs of the arthritic patient and provides traditional and non-traditional in-home care offerings based on each person's needs. Contact Live Free Home Health Care for more information on private duty care and to get a partner in care who can assist with appropriate pain management suggestions for someone with arthritis, as well as ensure a caring person is there when a helping hand is needed.

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About Live Free Home Health Care, LLC:

Serving the Lakes Region and central New Hampshire, Live Free Home Health Care, LLC is dedicated to providing top quality care in the comfort of home as an alternative to assisted living facilities or nursing homes. Family owned and operated, Live Free Home Health Care offers a wide range of services, from companion care and assistance with activities of daily living to skilled nursing, and all care is supervised and updated by a registered nurse. Live Free Home Health Care also offers medical alert systems to provide extra peace of mind should an emergency care need arise. Whether the need is for short or long term care, Live Free Home Health Care's compassionate staff promises to treat each client respectfully and like a cherished family member. For further information, contact (603) 217-0149 or visit www.LiveFreeHomeHealthCare.com.